

Ronan Telephone Company

312 Main Street Southwest
Ronan, Montana 59864-2707

March 7, 2014

VIA ECFS

Ms. Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90
Rural Broadband Experiments/Trials - Expression of Interest - Ronan Telephone
Company

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Ronan Telephone Company (RTC), located in Ronan, Montana, respectfully submits this non-binding Expression of Interest in potentially participating in the Rural Broadband Experiments program described in FCC Order 14-5 (January 31, 2014). RTC is a rural ILEC rate-of-return carrier serving a rural area of the Mission Valley on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Western Montana since 1960, including the communities of Ronan and Pablo. As an ILEC, RTC serves approximately 2800 customers in two exchanges spread over 115 square miles. RTC provides data, voice and video services. RTC is an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC), certified by the Montana PSC.

The economy of RTC's service area is based largely on tourism, ranching and agriculture, with a low population density, and high service costs. It is very difficult and costly to provide advanced services in the most sparsely populated areas of Western Montana. However, rural customers continue to demand improved broadband service, to meet their personal, educational and business needs. The Flathead Indian Reservation is also in need of economic development; since it experiences many disadvantages common to tribal areas.

RTC has been approached by the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of the Flathead Indian Reservation inquiring if RTC would be interested in collaborating with the CSKT in implementing a Rural Broadband Experiment/Trial under WC Docket No. 10-90 for areas that are currently underserved on the Flathead Reservation. RTC is interested in investigating this program and collaborating with the CSKT in a Rural Broadband Trial to improve service on the Flathead Reservation. RTC is now in the final stages of completing a

Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) middle mile network which serves the Flathead Reservation as a part of a regional fiber optic network initiative funded by NTIA under the ARRA of 2009. This network, which is identified and incorporated as "Montana West, LLC", is perfectly positioned to serve as a backbone network to enable a last mile initiative to unserved and underserved areas of the Flathead Reservation in a Rural Broadband Trial.

The prospect of implementing a Rural Broadband Trial has just recently come to RTC's attention because of the request of the CSKT. Consequently, RTC has not had time to make any detailed studies of what we may ultimately propose. However, RTC, in collaboration with the CSKT, is likely to propose to serve remote customers on the Flathead Reservation with ethernet based services provided over a "last mile" network utilizing fiber optic facilities. Voice, broadband and video services would be provided at service levels far exceeding the status quo, which will be defined in the proposal which may be made under this program.

RTC envisions this project as a joint collaboration with the CSKT and Hot Springs Telephone Company (another ILEC located on the Flathead Indian Reservation). We also will seek out and encourage involvement and cooperation with Lake County, the towns of Polson, Ronan, Hot Springs and St. Ignatius, Lake County Community Development Corporation and Sanders County Community Development Corporation. CSKT has also filed a letter Expression of Interest with the FCC herein, which RTC fully supports.

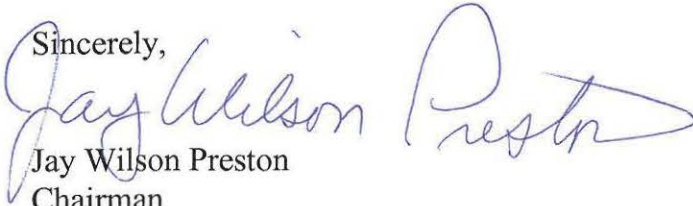
RTC has also been made aware that a consortium of government and economic development entities in Missoula County are preparing a letter Expression of Interest for rural areas that may qualify for this program in Missoula County (adjacent to the Flathead Reservation to the south). We have been informed that a letter of interest is being sent to the FCC by the "Bitterroot Economic Development District" (BREDD) representing this consortium. This consortium has been conducting a study of broadband needs for the City of Missoula and Missoula County, which includes an inventory of fiber optic facilities currently available and facilities that may be needed by the community in the future. The Montana West BTOP network also extends through Missoula County from the community of Arlee (on the Reservation) to a hub point in the center of the City of Missoula. Similarly to the Flathead Reservation, RTC is also interested in collaborating with the Missoula effort, if a proposal is made by them to serve unserved and underserved rural areas of Missoula County.

RTC would be interested in being considered for the FCC's rural broadband experiments program in collaboration with CSKT and/or with a similar effort that may be proposed in Missoula County. We believe that our proposal(s) will provide the FCC with valuable information regarding technology transitions in rural tribal areas and rural areas of Missoula County currently served by rate-of-return ILECs. Thank you for considering our Expression

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of Interest in this program. If I can answer any questions, please contact me at 406-676-2751 or jaywp@ronan.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jay Wilson Preston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jay" being the most prominent.

Jay Wilson Preston
Chairman

Ronan Telephone Company

cc: Janet Camel - Planning Director - Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Marcy Allen - Executive Director - Bitterroot Economic Development District